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## Communication and Rhetoric in Knowledge

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### Abstract

The evolution of rhetoric on the ground of science, philosophy, literature and so on proves us the fact that it plays an essential role in the becoming of the present society. It organises itself into a permanent catalyst of the social-human processes. It is as the “salt in your food” when it comes to configuring and reconfiguring the human existence and knowledge. This field of study reflects, in the most accessible way possible, the evolution of the human spirit. The use of word has always proven man’s strength to express, convey thoughts, knowledge, emotional states, attitudes, opinions and intentions. We may add to the virtue of faith and the virtue of hope the virtue of communication. Today, the rhetoric reorganises and revives the basis for the development of the interpersonal and interdisciplinary relations – communication. This, because, on the one hand, democracy is in favour of rhetoric, while aristocracy is against it (Henri Wald, 1983: 40), and on the other hand, because the number of border disciplines has amazingly increased at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The dialog between disciplines in exploring different areas of the reality presupposes a proper rhetoric.

This study is proposing an approach to rhetoric from the perspective of its contribution to stressing the knowledge acquisitions. The large number of disciplines of the human spirit has a common denominator: expression through countless forms of communication. Rhetoric has an impact on the effectiveness of communication; it is one of the means of achieving the goals targeted by human actions. We believe that, in the society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the rational use of rhetoric is the key to success in all the areas.

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**Keywords:** thinking – language; knowledge rhetoric; virtue of communication; contemporaneousness of rhetoric

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## Introduction

Although, many thinkers from different historical ages are among those that have considered rhetoric a superficial discipline, they have used it in the exercise of persuasion, demonstration and argumentation. Each of those represented, at that time, ways of exploring the truth. Thus, certainty, which excluded the possibility of error (according to the Cartesian method), in the view of the thinkers of that time and later on, was most often the purpose of the initiated and sustained actions. The rhetoric is a model of communication, despite of the fact that it had its share of controversies since the time of the Ancient Greece. Plato's dialogues have not avoided it (*Gorgias; Phaidros*), the philosopher seeing it as an elevated form of manipulation (Platon: 145-151). The importance of rhetoric, at that time, was weighted against the importance of philosophy, within the human existence. We believe that both forms of the human spirit aim at a greater mobility of the social participation, both by means of a compelling language, by justness and reasoning and by means of a language based on the new acquisitions of knowledge. Aristotle gave it a special attention and even wrote a treatise – *Rhetoric* (to which almost all the thinkers what followed reported to). For him, *the logic of argumentation* is crucial in the process of persuasion, but without being separated by ethos and pathos (Aristotel, 2004: 38-51). He launched the idea of a new rhetoric in his work *Treaty of argumentation. The new rhetoric* – written in collaboration with Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. They place Aristotle's argumentative rhetoric in the centre of attention as a reason for refreshing the approach to knowledge and its expression. They revive the argument and propose it as a way of maintaining the equilibrium between the unlimited, but uncertain concrete and the certain, but limited rational (Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca 2012: 139-147). Today, rhetoric and communication essentially contribute to the evolution of social and cultural relations. We may say that the later ones are decisively influenced by the nature of communication, the efficiency and the moment of its development and so on. A careful documentation and analysis work highlights aspects of the current rhetoric's becoming.

Along time, thought, knowledge and communication, rhetoric respectively have evolved in close interrelation.

## The natural relation thinking – language

We cannot speak in terms of primordially or anteriority when it comes to thinking and language. The expression "pure consciousness" (Edmund Husserl, 2011: 217) is a mental construct with no counterpart in reality (not in the immediate reality for the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl). It is a well-known fact that we think in word. The word is the vehicle of thought, and judgments (especially the scientific ones) cannot be made outside the linguistic expression (Edmund Husserl, 2007:11). Thinking is responsible for the existence of linguistic constructions, for their characteristics, for their efficiency and beauty, for reaching their purposes. Words are "sensitive and contingent vehicles that bear the signification" (Edmund Husserl, 2007: 109). Language cannot exist outside of thinking, as well as thinking cannot exist outside of language. It accompanies the becoming of knowledge, as well as the communication of its results. Abstract thinking is facilitated especially by the reflection expressed in word and less by the images of the sensitive intuition. Thus, the ideas do not exist in themselves as in Plato, but only in and by means of the word that objectifies them, in other words, the use of word in practice, as Ludwig Wittgenstein (2013: 131) suggests. Both thinking and language cannot be confused with objects, phenomena, processes they aim at (or the relations between them); they are only a transposition of those in our mind. Today, communication is complex; and language remains the main way of communicating the ideas (Georgeta Dan Spănoiu and Dan Ovidiu, 2010:176-177). Through communication, the human being creates both the inner universe and the outer universe. "Communication is an intrinsic phenomenon of being" (Matei Georgescu, 2007: 11).

Researches in psychology have revealed the fact that thinking does not render always with utmost fidelity the objective reality and its essential relations, and neither the subjective reality and the inner feelings. The fidelity ratio of transposing the reality in our thinking and language is also influenced by the mental filter of the individual: cognition ability, emotional experiences, specific of personality, adaptability, interaction, problem solving, level of aspiration, level of education and culture, etc. Transposing the reality into thinking may be distorted by the inability of an individual to identify and reflect the correct relations, by the existence of prejudice, fatigue, etc. Hence the inability of language (expressing such a reflection) to play with a high fidelity the reality. On the other hand, words

do not have the same significance for everyone. The significance depends both on the speaker (on his/hers professional, cultural, etc. affiliation) and on the hearer (his/hers quality, the interest shown for the approached subject and so on), as well as the spatio-temporal context in which the communication act takes place (Jean-Claude Abrie, 2002: 16-31).

### **From language to a rhetoric of knowledge**

The isolated word does not acquire a precise meaning, but rather a vague one. The word, in general, acquires a firm clarity when it is used in a phrase, in a spoken or written text. Words that express notions (the elementary forms of the rational knowledge that reflect abstractedly and generalized a class of objects, phenomena, and processes) must be connected (by means of grammar) within phrases, so as to express as accurately as possible our thoughts, i.e. what the speaker or the writer wants. We conclude: through the “elasticity” of the word, we can reflect and reveal precisely the concepts and the relations between them. Numerous disciplines have been concerned, over time, with communication. Philosophy is one of them. Though we would be tempted to believe that today the philosophy “has conceded” this subject of reflection to other disciplines, which have studied it from numerous perspectives, we find that it is the one that insists to solve the problems related to the essence of communication, rather than its form. This should not lead us to the conclusion that between philosophy and rhetoric a rupture occurs. On the contrary, the relationship between form and content, between rhetoric and communication is indestructible. „Philosophy is that discipline of the human spirit that questions the relationship between the intention of communication and the formation of the interpersonal community. It starts from the intentionality of the subject of communication, it passes through the proper communication, and the formation and upgrading of the group membership on the ground of society is observed. All these finally lead to the rational communication of humanity” (Ilie Pârnu, 2000: 168-169).

Rhetoric is preoccupied with the eloquence of the language, and not only. It plays an important role in capitalising the ideas and in their expression into human specific activities: knowledge, interrelation, creation, social practice and so on. Like other disciplines of the human spirit (theology, mathematics, anthropology, linguistics, etc.), the rhetoric was, at one point, claiming to occupy the status of global human science. It played an extremely important role in the evolution of each discipline, has stimulated the apparition of some new disciplines appropriate to the needs that appeared in different historical moments; has contributed to solving some important problems of the human knowledge. Today, it is a binder of the disciplines, especially of the interdisciplinary relations. Concepts discovered by philosophers (in establishing and developing some philosophic systems), by scientists (used in explaining and setting up some new scientific disciplines) had to be integrated into specific texts, accompanied by an effective rhetoric that is critical to the purpose for which that effort was initiated. During its becoming, rhetoric continuously contributed to the development of human knowledge. Persuasion (as an act of rhetoric), conviction, judgment, logical argument, scientific demonstration (subsumed to rhetoric) contribute to finding the objective truth.

Man has always been concerned with exploring objects, phenomena and processes, especially the links between them. Not the sporadic and random connections have helped him discover the essential links between them, but those repeatable, general, stable relationships. Understanding the essential relations between things, the human being has opened opportunities in interacting with those. Moreover, he sought to influence their behaviour (respecting their requirements), to shape it according to the needs that appeared in various stages of its humanization. Extremely important is the expression of these actions into words and the possibility to convey them. The activity of transmitting the newfound knowledge requires care in expression, so that the message sent to be correctly received. The exchange of information is vital for the development of interpersonal relations, in general, of interdisciplinary relations, in particular. But the scientific information is the subject of a particular rhetoric. Given the rhetorical aspects of the text, the author manages to give freshness and even colour when it is laborious, repetitive, and highly specialized. The scientific text supports, through rhetoric processing, a montage similar to that of images; contains a message, has a coherence, a continuity, a well-configured structure. We can speak about a paradigm of the rhetoric of scientific knowledge, because any paradigm implies a sense. The scientific knowledge is emergent to communication and rhetoric, its sense being given by the objectivity and relativity of the scientific truths, but also by the intentional character of the human knowledge. Therefore, the language is a divine gift for man. This is why he lives in a community, makes exchanges; he creates his own cognitive and emotional universe.

Moreover, he has succeeded, during his evolution, to replace the concrete objects, phenomena with their symbols, which allowed an easy passage from the particular to the general and vice versa. Thus, thinking has made possible the use of notions, categories, concepts, as well as the knowledge and use of objective laws, has shaped and particularised the human universe. The scientific, philosophic, religious, artistic knowledge and their result can be capitalised and enhanced by the succeeding generations, which pass on their knowledge through symbolic communication (Georgeta Dan Spânoiu and Dan Ovidiu, 2010:176). Communication contributes in a significant proportion to individual's possibility of taking part to the social life. This is the defining virtue of communication.

## Conclusions

Rhetoric has accompanied the road covered by the human knowledge from the subjective truth, from persuasion and judgment to logical-mathematic truths, to concepts and categories. It "paints" theoretical constructs, it makes the paradigms of knowledge accessible. Rhetoric highlights the acquisitions of knowledge; is the form without which the fund can remain imperceptible. In addition, this discipline plays an important role in systemising the knowledge.

About rhetoric, we can say that is an important catalyst of the evolution and manifestation of other disciplines of the human spirit. It facilitates the expression of the knowing subject and a fair perception of the message sent. Rhetoric plays an essential role in the dynamics and continuity of knowledge activities. Through belief, the choice of testing hypotheses is influenced and thus the way of a true knowledge is carved out, which will lead to solving problems that require (necessarily) to be solved at that time. The interactions within the human activities identify the known problem, and rhetoric, through the force of conviction, contributes to mobilising the (emotional and/or volitional) resources for the cognitive approach of that problem. It is part of the virtues of communication and rhetoric.

Rhetoric was and remains a characteristic of the human spirit's manifestation, which accompanies and expresses the acquisitions from all the fields in which the human being manifests and acts. Today, it is as complex as the fields in which it is used. A rigorous and harmonious construction of the spoken or written text, together with the image or gesture can ensure the success of that enterprise. A text with a proper rhetoric denotes professionalism. The apparition of the online communication has not negatively influenced the relationship between communication and its rhetoric, has not lead to the deconstruction of rhetoric. It has intensified the exchange of information, it has facilitated the long distance interactions, it has reconfigured the aspect of the economic, social, intercultural relations. We believe that, amongst all the parts of the human activity, knowledge had the most to gain from the creation of the online international scientific community, and the intensification of the scientific knowledge exchange. Joint research projects have become possible for researchers found at large geographical distances.

Controversial for centuries, rhetoric has successfully passed the test of time, as we can talk, without the risk of being wrong, about a history of rhetoric, one that continues to influence European culture.

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